

Sir John Hawtrey Benson

Born: 1843
President: 1910-1912
Died: 1931

John Hawtrey Benson was born in February 1843, the second son of Professor Charles Benson, a former President of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. John was educated at Trinity College Dublin where he had a distinguished undergraduate career. Concurrently with his arts course, he studied medicine at the Royal City of Dublin Hospital and at Sir Patricks Dun's Hospital, as well as in the schools of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and in Trinity College Dublin. He took first honours in mathematics and graduated in 1864. He qualified in medicine in 1865 and obtained the MD a few years later. He was elected to the Fellowship of the College of Physicians in 1874.

In 1866, he was appointed honorary Assistant Physician to the Royal City of Dublin Hospital, and two years later was promoted to Honorary Physician, a position which he held until 1894 when he retired from the active staff and was elected Consulting Physician to the hospital. He contributed numerous papers and articles to medical societies and journals on technical medical subjects.

In 1910, he was elected President of the College of Physicians on a two-year term. He had already served as College Censor from 1879 to 1881 and again from 1885 to 1887. He was also an examiner in the Royal College of Physicians in London.

For over 40 years he held the appointment of medical adviser in Ireland to the Colonial Office, retiring from that position in 1926. He received the honour of a knighthood in March 1912 and in July of the same year the honorary degree of LL D was conferred on him by Dublin University.

During the time when Benson was President, the College was smaller and less busy than now. Reviewing the minutes of the Council meetings during his presidency, regular agenda items included regulations of examinations and approval of examiners. The use of the College's building for meetings in Dublin by important relevant organisations included a request from Lady Aberdeen for a meeting of the Dublin Branch of the Women's National Health Association. More contentious items from his meetings included a National Insurance Bill to effect as wide an insurance as possible for the working population against sickness and breakdown, and the location of a hospital for treating patients with tuberculosis. The problem of dealing with a doctor who had been struck off but was still working as a doctor was also discussed. Other items were a letter of sympathy to the family of a doctor who was drowned with the RMS Titanic and concern in the College about the inappropriate use of the term "Malta Fever".



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In 1871, Benson married Dorothea, daughter of the Rev Thomas Power, incumbent of Templeree, County Tipperary and formerly of Clashmore County Waterford. They had no children. Sir John died at his residence in Fitzwilliam Square Dublin on 9 October 1931 at the advanced age of 88. He left personal property to the value of £10,825, and bequeathed his library to the College.

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